



STORIES OF LIFE!

The Gospel of Luke

The Story of a Christ-follower!

Luke 9:23-26

Message #31 of 50 – S810

Sermon given on September 23, 2018



Sunday Morning Service

Pastor Rick Lancaster

The Story of a Christ-follower!

Luke 9:23-26

Opening Comments

- Turn to **Luke 9**
- We continue a study through the Gospel of Luke – **The Stories of Life**
- Many of the women are away at the annual Women’s Retreat
- Rather than continuing through our study of Luke, thought I would deep a little deeper into something we looked at last week
- Last week I made a distinction between Christians and Christ-followers
- Someone asked me after the service if it was possible for someone to be a Christian and not be a Christ-follower – sadly, yes
- Listen to Paul’s words as he addresses the church in Corinth **1 Corinthians 3:1-3**

And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual *people* but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able *to receive it*, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where *there are* envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like *mere men*?

- These are Christians who are acting like ‘mere men’ and not like Christ
- They are following their carnal, fleshly desires – they are doing what feels right to them
- In our text for today, Jesus calls us to do it differently
- **Pray**

Teaching

- **The Story of a Christ-follower!**
- Something I said several times last week was, ‘The world does not need more Christians – it needs more Christ-followers’
- Ultimately, it is the Christ-follower who will experience the abundant life Jesus promised us
- Let’s look at what Jesus says about the pathway to the abundant life of following Him
- **Luke 9:23-26**

- God didn't create you to give you a good life, or a happy life, or a successful life, or to make you famous
- God created you, and Jesus came to give you a great life – a supernatural life – the life of a Christ-follower
- Jesus said in verse 23, 'If anyone desires to come after Me...'
- It all begins with our desires
- One desire has to be supreme in your life – to follow Jesus
- Turn to **Matthew 22**
- I summarize what that means with a simple phrase – Glorify God, bless others, and grow in faith
- That comes from two Scriptures – first is the Great Commandment
- **Matthew 22:35-38**
- Loving God and glorifying God should be synonymous in your heart and mind
- The greatest thing you can do in your life is love God
- As a Christ-follower glorifying God through love, obedience, and faith is your highest desire
- There should be a close second
- **Matthew 22:39-40**
- This is a beautiful reflection of the nature of God
- God is glorious and worthy of all honor, praise, and glory
- And then at the same time, people are very important to God
- Created in His image as a reflection of His glory and for the purpose of being in an intimate relationship with Him
- It should fill us with awe that Jesus puts loving others on par with loving God
- As a Christ-follower, we bless others by doing what the Bible tells us to do for others
- 'love one another' – John 13:34
- 'kindly affectionate...in honor giving preference' Romans 12:10
- 'let us not judge...' Romans 14:13 – 'admonish...' Romans 15:14
- 'serve...' Galatians 5:13 – 'bear one another's burdens' Galatians 6:2
- 'be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving...' Ephesians 4:32
- Turn to **Matthew 28**
- A Christ-follower glorifies God and blesses others

- The third general trait of a Christ-follower is **Growing in Faith**
- This is known as the Great Commission
- **Matthew 28:18-20**
- A Christ-follower is always growing in faith **Romans 8:29**
For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.
- Paul says that is a process
- Not only is a Christ-follower growing in their own faith, but they are playing some kind of role in helping others to come to faith in Jesus Christ, or helping Christians become Christ-followers
- Turn back to **Luke 9**
- A Christ-follower is glorifying God, blessing others and growing in faith
- Notice that nowhere in that description did I say we should pursue the abundant life
- The abundant life is not something we pursue – it is the fruit of being a Christ-follower
- If you desire the abundant life Jesus promised, which you should, concentrate on being a Christ-follower – the fruit of an abundant life will follow
- In verse 23, Jesus gives us three activities of a Christ-follower
- I am going to touch on the first and third, then spend some time on the second one
- First – **Deny Self**
- That means saying ‘no’ to any of your desires that get in the way of glorifying God, blessing others, or growing in faith
- As a little child, one of the first words we learn to say is ‘no’
- That is ‘self’ asserting itself in the very early part of our life
- To be a Christ-follower, we need to train self to yield to God
- The third activities of a Christ-follower – **Follow Jesus**
- That means following His example, following His instructions, following His life
- One of the reasons we study and teach through the Bible is so that we can know how to do that
- The third activity of a Christ-follower is – **Take up their cross daily**

- Last week I dealt with a common misconception about what Jesus means by this
- Sometimes people will call some bad thing they have to endure ‘their cross to bear’
- I don’t think most of those are crosses – they are thorns, trials, tribulations, difficulties, hardships, troubles – but not crosses
- Jesus was very specific when He said ‘cross’ – He could have chosen another word if He wanted to say trials or tribulations
- He chose ‘cross’ because it painted the perfect picture of what He was trying to communicate
- Crucifixion was a cruel way to punish someone – always fatal – a slow and agonizing death
- What is Jesus saying to us? What is a cross to us?
- We can start by saying what the cross was to Jesus
- We know Jesus picked up a physical cross, was nailed to it, and died on it
- That cross was not just an instrument of death, it was effectual for something **Colossians 2:13-14**

And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

- When Jesus said take up your cross, He wasn’t referring to a physical cross
- Jesus’ cross was mankind’s alienation from God **Colossians 1:21-22**
And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight.
- Jesus died on His cross so that we would no longer be aliens to God, but instead, children of God
- Jesus didn’t come to bring social reform – that was not His cross
- He did not come to bring religious reform – that was not His cross
- He did not come to deliver the Jews from the Romans – that was not His cross
- He came to save us from our sins
- In our verse, Jesus tells the Christ-followers to ‘take up their cross daily’
- This implies that every Christ-follower has a cross to take up

- Looking at Christ-followers from the past might help us
- The Apostle Paul's cross was to take the gospel where no one had heard of Christ
- Martin Luther's cross was the Scriptures alone
- Billy Graham's cross was to preach the gospel to large crowds
- Chuck Smith's cross was to simply teach the Bible simply
- I mentioned Brandon Ingraham – his cross is to bring the hope of Jesus Christ to the lost people of Indonesia
- By taking up their cross daily, they are giving their life to whatever it is that God has called them to
- They don't count their life as significant apart from what they are doing for Christ – Paul – **Philippians 1:21-26**

For to me, to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain. But if I live on in the flesh, this *will mean* fruit from *my* labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, *which is* far better. Nevertheless to remain in the flesh *is* more needful for you. And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith, that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again.

- A Christ-follower has a reason for living and dying much larger than themselves, their marriage, family, hobby, or job
- Their reason for living is Christ living through them
- They have a God-glorifying purpose that blesses others and causes faith to grow
- One thing you can say for sure about Christ-followers – Their lives are glorifying God, blessing others, and faith is growing in them and around them
- If you want to be a Christ-follower, and not just another of the 2.2 billion Christians in the world – deny yourself, take up your cross daily, and follow Jesus
- You might be thinking to yourself – what is my cross? I don't know!
- That is a very personal thing that only God can reveal to you
- He might use us to help you discover it, but the first cross you might have to take up is finding your cross
- Start by centering your heart and mind on God – seek to glorify Him, bless others, and be involved in the growing of faith, yours and others

- Pray, read your Bible, get into a Life Group, serve God somewhere, either inside the church or outside – all those things will help
- Then trust God to lead you to something way bigger than you
- Something He wants to do in the world – but won't do until He finds a Christ-follower to join Him in the work
- To start to discover what your cross is, answer these questions
- What has God put on your heart? God will give you a burden or passion for what he wants you to do – could be a clue
- What gifts has He given you? The natural abilities and talents and supernatural gifts God gives you are a clue to what He wants you to do
- Where is God bearing fruit in your life? When you are doing what God has put on your heart, utilizing the talents and gifts God gives you, good fruit is produced – that is a clue
- As you are doing that, look around your life for something bigger than you that God might want to do
- When you find something, take a step of faith, even the smallest possible step in that direction, and then trust God to guide you to the next step
- When you find that thing, your cross, take it up every day, denying yourself, and you follow Jesus
- This world does not need more Christians – it needs more Christ-followers letting God work in them to change the world in Christ's name
- All it requires is a real love for God and a willingness to take up your cross daily
- **Pray!**